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GENERAL NOTES.

Members and friends of the Society are invited to aid the Committee on Publication in carrying out the work of this department. Communications of general interest will be gladly received, and may be sent to SIDNEY D. TOWNLEY, 2023 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, California.

Dr. HENRY S. PRITCHETT, for some years Professor of Astronomy in Washington University, St. Louis, and recently Superintendent of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, was inaugurated President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on October 24th.

The degree of Doctor of Science has been given by Cambridge University to Professor S. P. LANGLEY, Director of the Smithsonian Institution.

Dr. HERMAN S. DAVIS, recently expert computer of the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey, has been appointed observer at the International Latitude Observatory at Gaithersburg, Maryland, one of the six stations established by the Central Bureau der Internationalen Erdmessung for an investigation of variations of latitude.—*Science*, November 9, 1900.

The will of Professor PIAZZI SMYTH makes provision for the publication of his spectroscopic manuscripts, and also for the assistance or promotion every ten or twenty years of an expedition for the study of some particular branch of astronomical spectroscopy at mountain elevations of not less than 6,000 feet.

Nature for October 25th contains an interesting article under the title, "Recent and Proposed Geodetic Measurements." From it we learn that the French propose to remeasure the Peruvian arc measured by BOUGNER in 1735–45. A preliminary survey of the region has been made, and it has been decided to extend the arc at both ends so that it will cover six degrees of latitude, about twice the extent of the former measurement. The arc will cross the equator extending from the neighborhood of Sullana in Peru to Pasto in Columbia. The country is far from smooth, and the task will be a difficult one. "Three bases of about eight or nine kilometers in length will be measured, one approximately central and two of verification at the north and south ends respectively. The difference of level between the central base and the sea at Guayaquil, where tide-gauges will be erected, will be determined with the greatest nicety. Throughout the arc fifty-two stations will be selected for observation, of which three will be fundamental, and the longitudes be determined by telegraph. Magnetic observations will be carried on as a matter of course, and in a country marked by so many mountain masses special care will be taken to determine their extent and density, with the view of eliminating the effect of local attraction." The work of this survey will be commenced next spring.

The Russian and Swedish governments are carrying out the measurement of an arc in the extreme north, in Spitzbergen, between latitudes seventy-seven and eighty-one degrees. Two base lines will be measured and fifty triangulation stations occupied. The work is already well under way.

A third arc is now being measured in South Africa, and if the director of the work, Sir DAVID GILL, Her Majesty's Astronomer at the Cape of Good Hope, is able to carry out his plans, this will dwarf into insignificance anything heretofore done in the way of measuring an arc of a meridian. He proposes to extend the measurements from the Cape of Good Hope to the mouth of the Nile, and thence across the Mediterranean Sea by means of the islands of Greece, and there to connect with the European systems, making in all an arc 105° in extent. It is to be hoped that the plan can be successfully carried out, but the difficulties are many. A start upon the work has already been made, but measurements are temporarily at a standstill on account of the war with the Boers.

The November number of *Popular Astronomy* contains an interesting account of the opening of the Whitin Observatory of Wellesley College. The building, of white marble, was built and equipped by one of the trustees of the College, Mrs. JOHN C. WHITIN. "The initial equipment consists of a 12-inch Clark equatorial refractor, a 3-inch transit, a sidereal clock, chronograph and a 6-foot-focus Rowland concave-grating spectroscope with heliostat. The telescope is furnished with spectroscope for solar work, polarizing photometer, micrometer, and small star spectroscope, all with electric illumination. Other minor instruments are already purchased, and it is intended to provide less costly apparatus in duplicate for the elementary practice of laboratory divisions."

Two addresses were given on the occasion, one by Professor EDWARD C. PICKERING, of Harvard, on "The New Planet *Eros*," the other by Professor DAVID P. TODD, of Amherst, on "Laboratory Work in Astronomy."